



COMMITTEE ON HATE VIOLENCE

November 17, 2010

Dear Community Organization Leader:

The Montgomery County Committee on Hate Violence (COHV) is very disturbed by recent cases of bullying that have resulted in the premature deaths of bright young people. We know that groups such as yours share this concern and have taken, and continue to take, steps to stop bullying.

Bullying is an issue that must be addressed by community-wide action. All of us need to step up and do more to stop bullying. We believe:

- **Schools** must have effective anti-bullying policies, prevention programs, effective disciplinary actions, interventions, and other tools;
- **Parents and teachers** must recognize that they are models for young people and engage in behaviors that demonstrate tolerance and the acceptance of differences. They also need to monitor the behaviors of children, recognize when children are being bullied, and take immediate actions to stop bullying;
- **Students** must be given encouragement and incentives to report bullying. In addition, they need to develop leadership skills that empower them to speak up when they witness bullying;
- **Businesses** must have effective policies and programs in place that promote tolerance and punish intolerance, including bullying in the workplace;
- **Religious organizations** must teach and promote tolerance and acceptance; and
- **Communities** must welcome and promote understanding and acceptance of people of all races, backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, abilities, and sexual orientation.

Bullying will not end until everyone in our community does something to stop it. All of us must continue to educate our constituents and fellow citizens so that they have the knowledge and tools to help stop bullying. In a recent article in the publication, *Educational Researcher*, it was noted that:

“Research now suggests that bullies, their victims, bystanders, parents, teachers, and other adults in the building are all part of an ecology in schools that can either sustain or suppress bullying behaviors. And finding a solution to the problem requires a similarly broad, multilevel response, an interdisciplinary group of researchers argued earlier this year in a special issue of "Educational Researcher." It suggests that bullying will be reduced and/or stopped when prevention and intervention programs target the complexity of individual, peer, school, family, and community contexts in which bullying unfolds.”

Office of Human Rights

COHV advises the Montgomery County Council, the Montgomery County Executive and County agencies about the spectrum of issues related to hate violence and ways to reduce the problem in Montgomery County. Our volunteer members work towards promoting a community environment of equality, understanding and respect for all people through education, collaboration, legislation and public policy programs.

We are writing to you to encourage you to review the steps you may have already taken to stop bullying and to consider taking additional steps.

We encourage you to pay particular attention to what you can do to prevent cyber-bullying, which is particularly harmful and on the rise in our society today.

There are numerous resources -- including books, movies, lesson plans, instructor guides, tips, and websites -- that provide free tools for you to use in your efforts to stop bullying. A list of some of these resources is attached to this letter.

If you have found that certain anti-bullying tactics have been particularly effective, please share your experiences with us. We are collecting this information so that we can compile and share "best practices" with others in our community.

Thank you for everything you have done and will continue to do to fight bullying in Montgomery County. If you would like additional information about our Committee, or would like to discuss this issue further, please feel free to contact me through the Office of Human Rights at 240-777-8450, or via e-mail at Committeeonhateviolence@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David A. Vignolo".

David A. Vignolo
Chair,
Montgomery County Committee on Hate Violence
Montgomery County, Maryland

ATTACHMENT

Here are some examples of resources that can help prevent bullying. This is not a complete list, but rather a starting point. Many of these resources are free. This does not include the many books that are available in stores and libraries.

- The Southern Poverty Law Center has numerous free tools for teachers, parents, and students to promote tolerance and prevent bullying, including Bullying: Guidelines for Teachers; videos on bullying; tips on how to encourage bystanders to “speak up” when they see intolerance. <http://www.splcenter.org/>
- The Health Resources Administration has information and tips for children and adults on how to stop bullying, including What to Do if Your Child is Being Bullied. <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids/>
- The National Crime Prevention Council has information about cyber-bullying, including suggestions for what parents can do to recognize and stop it and FAQs for teens. <http://www.ncpc.org/topics/cyberbullying>
- The website www.stopcyberbullying.org offers information about cyber-bullying and what can be done to prevent it.
- The Trevor Project has tips for recognizing signs of suicide and helpful information for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender people who may be the victims of bullies. <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/takeaction>
- The Pacer Center National Center for Bullying Prevention offers tips to prevent bullying against children with disabilities. <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/bpam/engage.asp>
- The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) offers information about research on cyber-bullying, and links to other organizations and information sources. <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/news/resources/spotlight/092110-taking-stand-against-bullying.cfm>
- The U.S. Department of Education offers bullying prevention strategies. www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/training/bullying/bullying_pg17.html#bullying
- The American Psychological Association offers suggestions for combating bullying in the workplace. <http://www.apa.org/monitor/julaug06/banishing.aspx>